United Nations

Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia to arrive in Mogadishu on Monday, 4 May, for discussions with two Somali parties on sending a 500-member United Nations battalion which is to provide security for humanitarian assistance programme.

+ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees launches appeal for $150 million to assist 1.2 million refugees forced from their homes by ethnic violence in Yugoslavia.

+ Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations Marrack Goulding to leave New York tomorrow, 2 May; will meet on Sunday in Lisbon with Chairman of Conference on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

+ World Food Programme attempts to deliver emergency food aid to Mogadishu.

+ Governing Council of United Nations Development Programme to discuss applications for recipient status by eight new United Nations members -- all members of former Soviet Union -- at session beginning on Monday, 4 May, in Geneva.

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The Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, Mohammed Sahnoun, left last night for Somalia. He is scheduled to arrive in Mogadishu on Monday, 4 May.

The Special Representative will be discussing with the two parties in Mogadishu -- Interim President Ali Mahdi Mohamed and General Mohamed Farah Aidid -- the question of sending a 500-member United Nations battalion which is to provide security for the humanitarian assistance programme. Mr. Sahnoun will visit the north and the south of Somalia to hold talks with the various parties there.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has launched an appeal in Geneva saying funds were urgently needed to prevent a further spillover of refugees from Yugoslavia into the neighbouring States from the more than 1 million people displaced.

In a press release issued today by the UNHCR, High Commissioner Sadako Ogata said "the escalating violence in Yugoslavia has created the first major refugees crisis in Europe in 41 years".

The Agency said Mrs. Ogata had sent a letter to Foreign Ministers of donor nations, expressing her "deep alarm over the almost hourly increase in the number of refugees and displaced". There were at present over 1,240,000 refugees forced from their homes by ethnic violence in Yugoslavia, and UNHCR would need about $150 million in the next few months just to keep the displaced alive. According to the UNHCR, contributions to date totaled $14.1 million.

In her letter to Foreign Ministers, Mrs. Ogata said, "My office finds itself without the means to provide even minimal humanitarian relief".

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The Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations, Marrack Goulding, will leave New York tomorrow, 2 May, and will meet on Sunday with the Chairman of the Conference on Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Lisbon.

According to a United Nations spokeswoman, Mr. Goulding would travel to Yugoslavia on Monday, 4 May. He would be in Sarajevo on 5 and 6 May. On 7 May he would return to Belgrade and on 8 May he would visit the eastern sector and Zagreb before returning to New York.

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The World Food Programme (WFP) has dispatched a ship from Mombasa, Kenya, loaded with 5,000 tonnes of wheat to the Somali capital, Mogadishu, in an attempt to reopen emergency supply lines into the war-torn capital. The ship is expected to arrive on Sunday, 3 May.

The "Felix", a Romanian-registered vessel, will carry food to the approximately 1 million people in and around Mogadishu, who are in desperate need of food assistance.

There have been many reports of food shortages and subsequent malnutrition among the population in the city, but no emergency food assistance has reached the city for the last several months because of heavy fighting. The food will be distributed to all sides in the city, and the United Nations will be responsible for its transportation and distribution.

A previous attempt by the WFP to ship food on 5 March was unsuccessful when the ship came under shelling and machine-gun fire as it entered Mogadishu harbour. Following further negotiations with all the concerned parties in the

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Somali capital, and their assurance of safe passage for the ship, the Programme believed another attempt to ship food in was warranted.

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Eight new members of the United Nations, who have applied for recipient status at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), are set to benefit from the resources and funds of the Agency, according to Edward Omotoso, Deputy Director of the Division of External Relations and Governing Council of UNDP. The UNDP official says however that, based on the population size of the eight countries -- all members of the former Soviet Union -- the amount of money "will not be great", nor will it jeopardize the funding of countries already receiving aid from UNDP.

With the upcoming meeting of the Governing Council, opening in Geneva on Monday, 4 May, African and other poor countries have expressed concern that they may be marginalized by the developments in the former Soviet Union. According to Mr. Omotoso, the Governing Council will examine UNDP's resource outlook in light of the new applications during its session, which will end on 29 May. The Agency has decided that 55 per cent of its resources must go to the least developed countries, he said, and officials at the meeting will work to safeguard that policy, thereby ensuring that resources will not be taken away from poor countries.

Like all other Members, the eight States must advise UNDP's Governing Council of their plans and projects for a five-year period so that the Agency can make the appropriate allocation of funds. The eight States have told UNDP that their primary need was not for money, but for a United Nations presence in the form of technical cooperation and assistance, equipment, experts and scholars to expose them to the world in general.

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